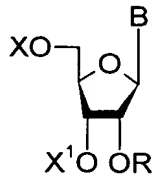
Amendments to the Specification:

At page 2, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 14 with the following amended paragraph:

According to the present invention, there is provided a process for the preparation of a compound of formula (1):



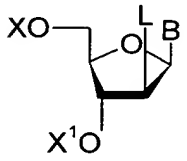
wherein:

X, and ~~X²~~ X^1 are each independently H or a protecting group;

B is a base; and

R is an alkyl, alkoxyalkyl, alkenyl, or alkynyl group, each of which may be optionally substituted;

which comprises reacting a compound of formula (2):



wherein

L is a leaving group; and

B, X and ~~X¹~~ X^1 are as defined above

with a compound of formula $Al(OR)_3$ wherein R is as defined above, under substantially anhydrous conditions.

At page 3, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 4 with the following amended paragraph:

Examples of protecting groups which can be represented by X and ~~X²~~ X^1 include acid labile protecting groups, particularly trityl and substituted trityl groups such as dimethoxytrityl and 9-phenylxanthen-9-yl groups; acid-labile acetal protecting groups, particularly 1-(2-fluorophenyl)-4-methoxypiperidine-4-yl (Fpmp); and base labile-protecting groups such as acyl groups, commonly comprising up to 16 carbon atoms, such as ethanoyl

B2 concld

groups or fatty alkanoyl groups, including particularly linear or branched C_{6-16} alkanoyl groups, such as lauroyl groups; benzoyl and substituted benzoyl groups, such as alkyl, commonly C_{1-4} alkyl-, and halo, commonly chloro or fluoro, substituted benzoyl groups.--

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At page 3, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 28 with the following amended paragraph:

B3

In addition to the presence of protecting groups X and ~~X'~~ X^1, bases employed in present invention may also be protected where necessary by suitable protecting groups. Protecting groups employed are those known in the art for protecting such bases. For example, A and/or C can be protected by benzoyl, including substituted benzoyl, for example alkyl- or alkoxy-, often C_{1-4} alkyl- or C_{1-4}alkoxy-, benzoyl; pivaloyl; and amidine, particularly dialkylaminomethylene, preferably di(C_{1-4}-alkyl) aminomethylene such as dimethyl or dibutyl aminomethylene. G may be protected by a phenyl group, including substituted phenyl, for example 2,5-dichlorophenyl and also by an isobutyryl group. T and U generally are not protected, but in certain embodiments they may advantageously be protected, for example at O4 by a phenyl group, including substituted phenyl, for example 2,4-dimethylphenyl or at N3 by a pivaloyloxymethyl, benzoyl, alkyl or alkoxy substituted benzoyl, such as C_{1-4} alkyl- or C_{1-4} alkoxybenzoyl.

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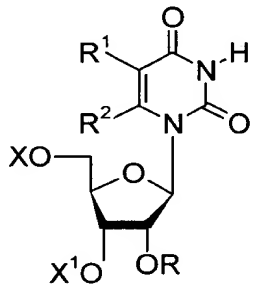
At page 4, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 1 with the following amended paragraph:

B4

In certain embodiments, X and ~~X'~~ X^1 comprise a single protecting group which protects both the 3' and 5' positions. Examples of such groups include disiloxanes, especially tetraalkyldisiloxanes, such as tetraisopropyldisiloxane.

At page 4, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 12 with the following amended paragraph:

Accordingly, a second aspect of the present invention provides a process for the preparation of a compound of formula (3):



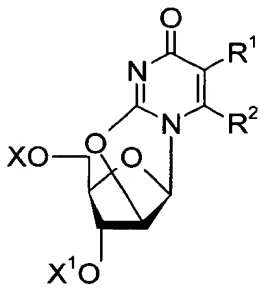
wherein:

X and ~~X'~~ X^1 are as defined above;

R^1 and R^2 are each independently H, alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, or halogen; and

R is an alkyl, alkoxyalkyl, alkenyl, or alkynyl group, each of which may be optionally substituted;

which comprises the reaction of a compound of formula (4)



wherein

X, ~~X'~~ X^1, R^1 and R^2 are as defined above;

with a compound of formula $Al(OR)_3$ wherein R is as defined above, under substantially anhydrous conditions.